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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 000885

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SUBJECT: THAILAND'S BALANCED REACTION TO IRAN-IAEA VOTE

REF: STATE 019516

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR SUSAN M. SUTTON FOR REASON 1.4 (B,D)

1. (SBU) Poloff delivered ref points and statements to MFA Director for Middle East Affairs Udomsak Sritangos on February 10. In a follow-up meeting on February 14, Udomsak explained that Thailand supports world opinion on this issue but must balance this position with its growing economic ties to Iran. The RTG would like to see this issue handled peacefully, but Thai officials are concerned that the current impasse could prompt a crisis and higher energy prices. Finally, Udomsak explained that the Iranian Foreign Minister may visit Thailand later this month and that MFA officials are willing to "pass on" any specific messages from the U.S. Poloff responded that the recent IAEA Board vote was a strong and clear message of international concern over Iran's actions and urged RTG officials to repeat this point.

2. (C) Comment. Udomsak's failure to elucidate a resounding "yes" when asked if Thailand supports the IAEA board vote represents either RTG inattention to the issue or the usual Thai willingness to avoid taking sides on tough international issues. Given Udomsak's repeated (and unprompted) efforts to "explain" Thailand's need to maintain good relations with Iran, we're betting on the latter.
BOYCE